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From: Canavan, Sheila
Sent: Wed 12/20/2017 3:13:37 PM
Subject: RE: FYI - EPA Delays Bans on Uses of Hazardous Chemicals (NYT)

Ugh. Always nice to read about ourselves in the NYT before we even get the official word.

From: Krasnic, Toni
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 7:06 AM
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Subject: FYI - EPA Delays Bans on Uses of Hazardous Chemicals (NYT)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/health/epa-toxic-chemicals.html>

E.P.A. Delays Bans on Uses of Hazardous Chemicals

By SHEILA KAPLAN DEC. 19, 2017



Senator Frank Lautenberg, Democrat of New Jersey, on Capitol Hill in 2012, a year before his death. He urged the stricter regulation of toxic chemicals. CreditChris Maddaloni/CQ Roll Call, via Getty Images

The Environmental Protection Agency will indefinitely postpone bans on certain uses of three toxic chemicals found in consumer products, according to an update of the Trump administration's regulatory plans.

Critics said the reversal demonstrated the agency's increasing reluctance to use enforcement powers granted to it last year by Congress under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

E.P.A. Administrator Scott Pruitt is "blatantly ignoring Congress's clear directive to the agency to better protect the health and safety of millions of Americans by more effectively regulating some of the most dangerous chemicals known to man," said

Senator Tom Carper, Democrat of Delaware and the ranking minority member on the Senate Environment and Public Works committee.

The E.P.A. declined to comment. In a news release earlier this month, the agency wrote that its “commonsense, balanced approach carefully protects both public health and the environment while curbing unnecessary regulatory burdens that stifle economic growth for communities across the country.”

Agency officials dropped prohibitions against certain uses of two chemicals from the administration’s Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, which details short- and long-term plans of the federal agencies. The third ban was dropped in the spring edition of that report.

The proposed bans targeted methylene chloride and N-methylpyrrolidone (NMP), ingredients in paint strippers, and trichloroethylene (TCE), used as a spot cleaner in dry-cleaning and as a degreasing agent.

Under an overhaul of the Toxic Substances Control Act last year, the E.P.A. initially is reviewing the risks of ten chemicals, including other uses of these three. The updated law is known as the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, named after the late New Jersey senator who had long championed an overhaul of the loophole-ridden toxic substances law.

The revised law had strong bipartisan support. The Senate passed the measure on a voice vote; the House approved it 403 to 12. The intention was to give the E.P.A. the authority necessary to require new testing and regulation of thousands of chemicals used in everyday products, from laundry detergents to hardware supplies.

Photo



E.P.A. Administrator Scott Pruitt testifying before a House committee earlier this month. The E.P.A. has declined to pursue bans on certain uses of three toxic chemicals. CreditPete Marovich/Getty Images

In a compromise that disappointed some environmental advocates, the law required the E.P.A. to examine about 20 chemicals at a time, for no longer than seven years per chemical. But the law expressly allowed for faster action on high-risk uses of methylene chloride, NMP and TCE.

Public health experts had been pushing for faster review of methylene chloride-based paint strippers after several deaths from inhalation, among them a 21-year-old who died recently after stripping a bathtub.

It has been several years since the E.P.A. first declared these applications of the three chemicals to be dangerous. The agency itself has found TCE “carcinogenic to humans by all routes of exposure” and has reported that it causes developmental and reproductive damage.

“Potential health concerns from exposure to trichloroethylene, based on limited

epidemiological data and evidence from animal studies, include decreased fetal growth and birth defects, particularly cardiac birth defects,” agency officials noted in 2013.

Methylene chloride is toxic to the brain and liver, and NMP can harm the reproductive system.

Michael Dourson, President Trump’s nominee to oversee the E.P.A.’s chemical safety branch, in 2010 represented the Halogenated Solvents Industry Alliance before the E.P.A., which was considering restrictions on TCE.

Mr. Dourson, who withdrew his name from consideration last week, had been working as an E.P.A. adviser while awaiting confirmation. The agency did not respond to a query about whether Mr. Dourson had been involved in the evaluation of TCE.

The E.P.A. now describes the enforcement actions regarding TCE, methylene chloride and NMP as “long-term actions” without a set deadline.

“The delays are very disturbing,” said Dr. Richard Denison, lead senior scientist of the Environmental Defense Fund. “This latest agenda shows that instead of using their expanded authorities under this new law, the E.P.A. is shoving health protections from highly toxic chemicals to the very back of the back burner.”

Representative Frank Pallone, Democrat of New Jersey and the ranking minority member of the House Energy and Commerce committee, agreed, saying, “These indefinite delays are unnecessary and dangerous.”

“The harmful impacts of these chemicals are avoidable, and E.P.A. should finalize the proposed rules as soon as possible,” he added.

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